United Nations A/C.4/55/SR.4

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
27 October 2000

Original: English

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 4th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 26 September 2000, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Kiwanuka ..... (Uganda)

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00-65906 (E)

The meeting was called in order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 18: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (*continued*) (A/55/23 (Part II), chaps. VI, IX-XI, A/55/23 (Part III), chap. XIII (D-F, H)), A/55/303, A/55/384-S/2000/870, A/AC.109/2000/2-10, A/AC.109/2000/13-18, A/C.4/55/L.3)

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Agenda item 90: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (*continued*) (A/55/23 (Part II), chap. VII, A/55/23 (Part III), chap. XIII (C), A/55/72 and Corr. 1, A/C.4/55/CRP.1, E/2000/68)

Agenda item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council (*continued*) (A/55/3, chap. VII, sect. D)

Agenda item 91: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/55/81 and Add.1)

1. **Ms. Smith** (United Kingdom) said that, over the past year, further progress had been made towards the modernization and development of the relationship between the United Kingdom and its overseas Territories — one of her Government's priorities since coming into office. The inaugural meeting of the Overseas Territories Consultative Committee had taken place in 1999, and the second meeting would be held in London on 3 and 4 October 2000. The meeting provided a forum for structured political dialogue and exchange of views between the elected representatives of the overseas Territories and her Government concerning the management of public affairs and the future development of the overseas Territories.

2. Her Government provided support to Territories afflicted by disaster, and offered a wide range of development assistance to those Territories which needed it. At the same time, in the spirit of partnership, it continued to promote sustainable development under strategic country programmes.

3. For the United Kingdom, the wishes of the peoples concerned, exercised in accordance with the United Nations Charter and other international treaties, were of paramount importance. The relationship continued to be based on the principles of self-determination, mutual obligations, freedom for the Territories to run their affairs to the greatest degree possible, and a firm commitment from the United Kingdom to help the Territories economically and to assist them in emergencies. There was therefore a basic commonality of approach between her Government and the Committee, and it was unfortunate that that commonality was not always properly reflected in all relevant resolutions, particularly those of the Special Committee on decolonization. It was regrettable that the Special Committee continued to apply the principle of self-determination selectively, although it was enshrined in the Charter and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

4. Her Government welcomed the efforts made by the Special Committee to pursue informal dialogue with the administering Powers in order to ascertain the wishes of the peoples of the Territories with a view to the possible removal of those Territories from the Special Committee's list; however, careful preparations would be necessary before substantive progress could be made.

5. **Mr. Bajpai** (India) said that the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples proclaimed the necessity of bringing to an end colonialism in all its forms and manifestations. Perhaps the most persistent and pernicious legacy of foreign rule remained the colonization of people's minds and thoughts. As new instruments of domination kept developing, the United Nations must be constantly alert to the necessity of ending all manifestations of colonialism.

6. As a member of the Special Committee, India supported the recommendation to proclaim the second International Decade for the Eradication of

Colonialism. The first Decade had ended with little progress on the fate of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. The complexities of their situation were well-known; yet the Committee could not shirk its collective responsibility to banish colonialism once and for all. It should work with the people of those Territories and give them an opportunity to determine their best interest, from a well-informed standpoint. Most of the remaining Territories confronted problems of economic development which they shared with the rest of the developing world; his delegation therefore welcomed the initiative to convene a joint meeting of the Special Committee and the Economic and Social Council to address those issues.

7. The administering Powers must demonstrate a spirit of cooperation, understanding, political realism and flexibility. The informal discussions conducted by the Special Committee with the administering Powers of American Samoa and Pitcairn were a step in the right direction.

8. As a founding member of the Special Committee and a sponsor of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, India reiterated its commitment to the ideals of freedom, democracy, human rights, dignity and peaceful coexistence.

9. **Mr. Ben Mustapha** (Tunisia) said that decolonization was one of the most remarkable successes of the United Nations, and a major contribution to the promotion of peace and security, social progress and the well-being of the peoples. Encouraging progress had been made by the Special Committee during the current year. Tunisia welcomed the dialogue with the administering Powers, and hoped that it would be further enhanced. The input of the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories remained essential.

10. One of the main tasks of the Special Committee was to ascertain the wishes and aspirations of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Efforts must be made to promote their awareness of their rights and options. The cooperation of the administering Powers was very important since that helped create the necessary conditions for the exercise of those rights. The transmission of information by the administering Powers under Article 73 *e* of the Charter, and seminars and visiting missions, remained important means of ascertaining the specific situation in each Territory so as to help promote economic and social development and the exercise of the right of self-determination. In view of the vulnerability and special needs of the small Territories, the administering Powers had a special responsibility to promote sustainable development there.

11. His delegation hoped that the international community would redouble its efforts to complete the work of decolonization.

12. **Mr. Lacanilao** (Philippines) said that his delegation fully associated itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Indonesia.

13. The continued existence of colonialism was a burden on the collective conscience of the States Members of the United Nations. It was difficult to discuss the vision of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world when certain segments of the world's population were still under foreign domination. The international community must therefore redouble its efforts to grant Territories under colonial domination the right to choose their future political status.

14. His Government supported the idea of a second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. The regional seminars held during the first Decade had served as useful sources of information and ideas for the Special Committee, and as forums for the exchange of views on matters of concern to the Non-Self-Governing Territories; his delegation hoped that the Special Committee would continue to utilize the ideas generated at those seminars.

15. His delegation commended the administering Powers which had supported initiatives for self-governance and shown respect for the choices made by the residents of the Territories under their administration. It fully recognized that the exercise of the right to self-determination by Non-Self-Governing Territories could take place in various stages depending on their specific economic, social and political situations.

16. As most of the Non-Self-Governing Territories were small island Territories, it would be disastrous to abandon them without ensuring a viable economic and social life for their inhabitants. Their economies were fragile, and deserved the concerted assistance of the international community. His delegation therefore

supported the Special Committee's recommendation that the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system should take measure to accelerate progress in the economic and social sectors of the Territories.

17. His Government believed that the right of self-determination of the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories included the right to benefit directly from the exploitation of the natural resources in the Territories. It welcomed the Special Committee's affirmation of the value of foreign investment for the economic development of the Territories, and called on the administering Powers to protect natural resources and the right of the inhabitants of the Territories to exploit and enjoy those resources.

18. **Mr. Bakoniarivo** (Madagascar) said that it was regrettable that, over 50 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a portion of the world's population was still claiming its right to self-determination, respect for political and civil rights, and determination of their future status.

19. His Government recognized that decolonization was a difficult process, because each Territory had its own characteristics. It believed that greater understanding and flexibility was needed on the part of all the parties concerned and particularly the administering Powers so as to enable the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to define their economic and social structures.

20. Since most of the Non-Self-Governing Territories were small island States, the administering Powers must provide greater assistance in establishing viable economic structures and ensuring the implementation of the Millennium Declaration.

21. His delegation deplored the acts of violence recently perpetrated against the United Nations Mission in East Timor, and hoped that appropriate steps would be taken to consolidate the progress made. With regard to Western Sahara, his delegation had already reiterated its support for the implementation of the settlement plan, in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, and for the organization of a free and impartial referendum on self-determination, it stressed the need for strict respect for the commitments made and reaffirmed the responsibility of the United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, for the full implementation of the settlement plan and the Houston agreements so that the people of Western Sahara could exercise their right of self-determination. Since the settlement plan had been supported by both Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO, it was the appropriate mechanism for a just and lasting solution to the conflict. Madagascar appealed to the international community to ensure the timely implementation of that plan. His delegation fully supported the comments of the representative of Algeria on the subject.

22. His delegation endorsed the call for the elimination of colonialism in the declaration of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries at the 13th ministerial conference, in April 2000. It welcomed the organization of regional seminars, including the recent seminar held at Majuro (Marshall Islands) in May 2000, as an essential means of planning the strategy and future activities of the United Nations in the area of decolonization.

23. His delegation supported the idea of a second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. At the end of that Decade, no country or people should manage the destiny of any other country or people, however small.

24. In the modern world, lasting peace would not be possible unless it was built with the participation of all peoples without distinction and was based on strict respect for independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the principle of non-interference and non-use of force.

25. **Mr. Mwakawago** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that it was regrettable that, at the dawn of the new millennium, the decolonization process had not yet been completed. The United Nations must ensure that the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories attained their right to self-determination as provided for in the Charter. His delegation welcomed the launching of the second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and hoped that the international community would redouble its efforts aimed at the complete elimination of colonialism.

26. His delegation urged the speedy implementation of the settlement plan for Western Sahara; the referendum should be held without delay. Developments elsewhere should provide important lessons in that respect. His delegation appealed to the parties concerned to cooperate with the United Nations in that endeavour.

27. His delegation endorsed the recommendations of the Special Committee aimed at accelerating the transmission of information under Article 73 *e* of the Charter, safeguarding the rights of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to their natural resources, and ensuring that all economic activities were geared towards strengthening and diversifying the economies of those Territories. It expressed its support to the specialized agencies and organizations which had continued to cooperate with the United Nations, and urged those bodies which had not yet provided assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories to do so as soon as possible. It hoped that the administering Powers would continue to facilitate United Nations visiting missions, and that regional seminars would be maintained as complementary sources of information about the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

28. **Mr. Fils-Aimé** (Haiti) noted that the terms "decolonization" and "non-self-governing" were unfortunately still in use in the year 2000. Forty years after the Declaration on decolonization, 17 Territories were still not self-governing. It was to be hoped that they would not have much longer to wait. Haiti, as a country that had suffered under colonial domination for 312 years, was well placed to appreciate the importance of the task facing the Special Committee on decolonization. His delegation joined with others in expressing support for the peoples of the 17 non-independent Territories and for the complete eradication of colonialism.

29. In that connection, the constructive attitude of the administering Powers in New Caledonia and Tokelau was encouraging. It was important to remember that self-determination could take several forms, including independence, free association and complete integration with the administering Power, all of which were legitimate in terms of the principles set forth in the relevant General Assembly resolutions. Tokelau had opted for a status of free association with New Zealand: New Caledonia had the right, under the Nouméa Accord, to become a member or associate member of various international organizations (including the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Labour Organization), while East Timor had preferred independence.

30. Most Non-Self-Governing Territories were small islands at risk from natural disaster and environmental phenomena such as coastal erosion and drought. Accordingly, the United Nations and its specialized agencies should provide them with support to ensure that the economic and social needs of their populations were adequately met. In that connection, administering Powers had a duty not to abuse the natural and human resources of those Territories and to promote the political, economic and social development of their peoples.

31. More than 80 countries had acquired independence since the end of the Second World War, and the United Nations had contributed admirably to the decolonization process. Yet the fact that there were still 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories might be seen as potentially jeopardizing the Organization's credibility. Close cooperation between the Special Committee on decolonization and the international community would help to bring the decolonization process satisfactorily to a close and avoid the need for a third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

32. **Ms. Nuanthasing** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the United Nations could be justly proud of its contribution to the struggle of millions of people for freedom throughout the world. Many former colonial Territories had attained independence, most recently Tuvalu, which had just joined the Organization as a sovereign State. Despite such commendable progress, the goal of the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism had not yet been fully attained, as there were still 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories that had been unable to exercise their right of self-determination and choose their own destinies. Greater international cooperation in pursuit of the decolonization process was needed. Accordingly, her delegation supported the Special Committee's proposal to launch a second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, from 2001 to 2010, and would work actively on behalf of a world free from colonialism.

Requests for hearings

33. The Chairman said that the Committee had before it a number of communications containing requests for hearing, one relating to Gibraltar and 20 relating to Western Sahara. If there were no objections, he would take it that the Committee wished to grant those requests.

34. *It was so decided.*

35. The Chairman said that the Committee would take action on all draft resolutions relating to decolonization on 29 September. In that connection he drew the Committee's attention to the recommendations of the Special Committee on decolonization, as set forth in that Committee's report (document A/55/23, Part III). He then informed the Committee that a request for hearing relating to New Caledonia had been received from Mr. Roch Wamytan, President of the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS), who, it appeared, would be free to address the Committee only on that very date. He suggested that the Committee should give Mr. Wamytan an opportunity of addressing it on 29 September.

36. *It was so decided.*

37. **Mr. Zahid** (Morocco) said that, at the Committee's previous meeting, his delegation had asked a question which was to have been answered at the current meeting.

38. **Ms. Maldonado** (Department of Political Affairs), explained that the Department of Political Affairs had requested the Office of Protocol to issue grounds passes to representatives of the Frente POLISARIO to facilitate their access to the United Nations in the context of the good offices of the Secretary-General and the settlement plan for Western Sahara. The grounds passes had been duly issued, in accordance with the practice of the previous several years, following the transfer, in 1994, of the Office of the Special Representative for Western Sahara.

39. **Mr. Zahid** (Morocco) said that the term "grounds passes" appeared to mean unrestricted passes. He was not sure what was meant by the transfer, in 1994, of the Office of the Special Representative for Western Sahara. The settlement plan did not give the persons in question any right to grounds passes. Had those passes been valid ever since 1994? How had the matter been handled prior to that date? As a rule, passes issued to petitioners were valid for only two days. The situation was thus clearly irregular. His delegation considered that its question had not been adequately answered.

40. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria) said that the Frente POLISARIO representatives were not merely petitioners. Their organization was a party to the conflict with Morocco, and as such its representatives could properly have the passes they needed in order to be able to do their work.

41. **Mr. Zahid** (Morocco) said that the Frente POLISARIO was a party only to the settlement plan, not to the conflict. In fact, there was no conflict but, even if there had been, he was not aware that the Organization issued passes to parties to conflicts as such. Discussions had taken place, to be sure, but it was not clear what the connection was between participation in discussions and United Nations grounds passes. Special passes, each issued for a specific purpose and valid for a specific date, would be a different matter.

42. **The Chairman** said that further clarification would be provided in due course.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.